

VZCZCXR05669

OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR

DE RUEHFR #0664/01 1351529

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

O 151529Z MAY 09

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6263

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000664

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/15/2019

TAGS: PREL EUN BK BM MD SO CE IR RS GG FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH GAERC PREVIEW: GEORGIA, BOSNIA, SOMALIA,
AND MORE

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Greg D'Elia for reasons 1.4 b
and d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. On May 15, French MFA Deputy Chief for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Mathieu Carmona previewed the May General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC). Overall, this General Affairs Council will be largely devoted to preparation of the June European Council, which in turn will focus on responding to the economic crisis and next steps on the Lisbon Treaty. Foreign Ministers will discuss increasing EU efforts to promote long-term stability in Georgia. Themes to be discussed during the "jumbo" format combining Foreign Ministers and Defense Ministers include Bosnia and Somalia/piracy. Iran, Sri Lanka, Burma, Russia, and Moldova will all be briefly discussed. Carmona said that the GOF reviewed the latest USG talking points on the Middle East with great interest, but that the EU is nowhere near consensus on Middle East policy, particularly after Israeli FM Lieberman's European tour. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Georgia: France requested this topic be addressed at the GAERC, to increase the EU's efforts to promote Georgia's long-term stability. Carmona noted growing political tension within Georgia, the difficulty of influencing Russia to act constructively, and the uncertainty of the international presence in Georgia, with UNOMIG in Abkhazia, the OSCE Mission in South Ossetia, and the EU Monitoring Mission all up for renewal in coming months. Carmona said France views this situation as "dangerous," and will thus encourage the EU to use its two levers within Georgia to prevent further deterioration of the situation: visas and free trade. The European Commission is already negotiating a visa agreement and preparing for negotiations on a free trade agreement. Carmona noted that the Eastern Partnership is another way to reinforce Georgia's ties with the EU and promote overall stability.

¶3. (C) Bosnia: Defense and Foreign Ministers will discuss Bosnia and Operation Althea. The political message is nothing new: a firm approach with Bosnian leaders to reinforce the prospect of EU membership while ruling out nationalist and separatist rhetoric. On the military front, the ministers will build on the PSC's steps towards developing a new concept of operations for Operation Althea. Since the initial military objectives have been attained, a reconfigured EU mission will likely focus on training and guidance. Acknowledging differences of opinion with the U.S. on this question, Carmona said Vice President Biden's trip to the region next week should be very helpful in promoting dialogue. He said an October/November timeframe for transitioning the Office of the High Representative to the EU Special Representative seems likely.

¶4. (C) Somalia and Piracy: The Foreign and Defense Ministers will tout the success of Operation Atalanta, with no vessels protected by Atalanta succumbing to pirate attacks and more than 100 pirates delivered to judicial systems (mostly in Kenya). The ministers will discuss raising the visibility of the operation, particularly within the UK, as

well as the need for more resources. Carmona said that aerial reconnaissance is one obvious need as Atalanta seeks to survey the vast area around the Seychelles. Carmona noted that the EU continues to seek complementarity with NATO counter-piracy efforts and hopes that NATO will draw on new, non-EU resources rather than drawing from the pool already operating in Atalanta. The second focus of this discussion will be the possibility of adding EU partners to France's initiative to train one Somali 500-troop battalion using its base in Djibouti. France announced its initiative in the context of the April conference on Somalia in Brussels, responding to the Somali President's request to the international community for help with security training. France seeks to amplify its efforts, which will likely unfold in the September timeframe, by adding EU partners. GAERC conclusions will include language encouraging reflection on how the EU could contribute to this initiative, which France views as a "foot in the door" for attracting more resources. Carmona noted that possible EU actions could range from the "most ambitious" possibility, an ESDP mission built around the French core, to the EU agreeing to take over the initiative after France trains the initial battalion. Carmona noted that the cost would be much less than other missions, France plans to draw on existing resources and 100 Djibouti-based trainers at a price of only 1.5 million euros (\$2 million). He said initial reaction has been positive, particularly as Germany's initial reticence had already been overcome. Carmona added that the EU would be open to non-EU contributions to this training effort.

¶5. (C) Iran, Sri Lanka, Burma: Lunch discussion will include Iran, at the request of the UK delegation, though the

PARIS 00000664 002 OF 002

situation has not evolved beyond last month's discussion. Carmona said France assesses that the economic situation in Iran will worsen, increasing pressure on the regime. On Sri Lanka, the ministers will issue conclusions calling for the government to fulfill the commitments it made during the joint April visit by FM Kouchner and UK FM Miliband. The ministers will also discuss possible leverage on the Burmese junta. Carmona said an interagency meeting is taking place in Paris today to discuss possible options, given the scant success of sanctions. He said that action could be in the context of either the UN or the EU's cooperation with Asian countries. In the UN, options could include pursuing a Security Council Presidency declaration or calling a dedicated meeting of the Human Rights Council. The EU will also have several upcoming opportunities for dialogue with Asian countries: the upcoming EU-China Summit, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) (on the margins of which the EU has a standing troika meeting with the Burmese junta on human rights), and the next ASEAN summit, at which the EU presidency will be present.

¶6. (C) Russia, Moldova: The Czech Presidency will provide an update on preparations for the upcoming EU-Russia Summit. Carmona said France does not expect many deliverables, noting that debate within the EU has thus far identified Russia's protectionist measures in response to the economic crisis as the primary issue. Romania has again put Moldova on the agenda in order to encourage a more vocal EU protest against Moldova's unilateral imposition of a visa requirement for Romanians.

¶7. (C) Middle East: Carmona said that the GOF had reviewed the latest USG talking points on the Middle East with great interest, but the EU is currently unable to reach consensus on Middle East policy. France had previously urged EU conclusions on Middle East peace while policy reviews were simultaneously taking place in the U.S. and Israel, but the effort ran into opposition by the Czech EU presidency. Carmona said that Israeli FM Lieberman's recent European tour highlighted the complete lack of policy consensus within the EU, but said France eagerly awaits the outcome of President Obama's May 18 meeting with his Israeli counterpart.

